

Preparing and Serving Beets: Checklist & Tips



Peak Season in Washington State: Year-round

Variety

- ☐ Chioggia: rounded, striped interior, sweet and mellow flavor; bright green tops are mild and tasty; germinates strongly and matures quickly; does not get woody with age
- ☐ Golden: buttery color, sweet mild flavor
- ☐ Red: Most common; found less tender as they age, but sweetness intensifies
- ☐ Baby beets: Pulled early in season to make room for other beets; very tender and greens are optimal



Ordering Specifications

Styles

- Bunched beets: beets tied in bunches. Tops full length and no less than 6 inches.
- Beets with short-trimmed tops: beets showing leafstems ranging no more than 4 inches in length
- Topped beets: tops removed not more than ½ inch in length
- Small: 1-2 inches in diameter
- Medium: 2-3 inches in diameter
- Large: over 3 inches in diameter

Grades

- U.S. No.1 – Well trimmed, firm, fairly smooth, fairly well shaped, fairly clean, and free from soft rot, damage from cuts, discoloration, freezing, growth cracks, pithiness, and woodiness. Bunched tops or beets with short-trimmed tops shall have tops that are fresh and free from decay and damage by discoloration, freezing, disease, etc. Diameter of beets should not be less than 1 ½ inches.

- U.S. No. 2 – Same as above except beet roots are well trimmed, firm, *not excessively rough, not seriously misshapen* instead of fairly smooth and clean.

Receiving & Shipment Inspection

- ☐ Optimal, peak season beets are firm, smooth skinned and non-wilted leaves, if still attached
- ☐ Beets 3" or more tend to be tough and fibrous
- ☐ Badly misshapen: beets are flattened, 3-sided or otherwise misshapen to extent that ordinary process of trimming results in more than 25% loss by weight is incurred in excess
- ☐ Serious damage: any defect, or any combination of defects which processing quality of beet is compromised with a loss of more than 25% by weight in excess

Storage Guidelines

- ☐ CCP: Cold moist storage (33-39°F, 85-95% relative humidity)
 - Similar to other root crops
 - Some have placed in moist sand or sawdust
- ☐ Remove beet greens prior to storage of root to avoid shriveling and reduced flavored roots, keep tap root intact
- ☐ For storage, place unwashed green tops in a plastic bag and refrigerate to up to 2 weeks
- ☐ Estimated shelf life is up to 5 months, without tops
 - Ask the farmer/vendor the actual shelf life for each shipment of beets

Beet Recipes with Packaging & Serving Recommendations



Preparing Raw, Fresh Beets

Materials Needed (Washed, rinsed, sanitized and air-dried)

- ☐ Cutting board
- ☐ Knives
- ☐ Vegetable scrubbing brush
- ☐ Slicer (mainly for medium to large turnips)
- ☐ Potato peeler
- ☐ Hand peeler

Preparation

- ☐ Wash and scrub thoroughly with brush in cold running water
 - Avoid puncturing the skin when scrubbing
- ☐ Trim off the tops (greens) to ½ inch and remove dangling roots
- ☐ Place in potato peeler to peel skins
- ☐ Peel remaining skin with hand peeler
- ☐ Use tomato slicer to cut beets into even slices if large or cut into halves or quarters if small
 - Even pieces will allow turnips to cook uniformly
 - ½-1" thick cubes or slices are recommended
- ☐ If using golden beets, release cut beets in a bowl of ice water with a small amount of lemon juice or vinegar
- ☐ Label, date and refrigerate fresh-cut items
- ☐ CCP: Hold at 41°F or below until serving

Serving Suggestions:

- Grating beets and add to salads can add color and crunch
- Adding a small amount of acid (lemon or vinegar) can enhance color and flavor. For golden beets, this process prevent oxidation/change in color

Preparing Cooked Beets

Materials Needed (Washed, rinsed, sanitized and air-dried)

- ☐ Cookie sheets or shallow roasting pans

- ☐ Parchment paper to line pans
- ☐ Oven rack(s), as many as needed
- ☐ Cutting board (beets will stain)
- ☐ Knives
- ☐ Vegetable scrubbing brush

Preparation

- ☐ Wash and scrub beets and trim greens, if attached
- ☐ Place *evenly halved beets (with skin) face down* in a shallow pan or cookie sheet, keeping a 2" clearance on all sides
 - Avoid overcrowding; will cause them to steam
- ☐ Cover pans securely with aluminum foil (optional)
- ☐ Cook in convection oven at approximately 370-375°F for about 30-35 minutes
 - Depending on the sizes, cooking time will vary*
- ☐ Remove from oven when fork tender and cool
 - Check by placing a knife/fork in the biggest piece – ready if it slides out easily
- ☐ Once cooled, peel skins and cut into bite sized pieces
- ☐ *Tip:* Beware of staining clothes and cutting boards, remove purple stains by rubbing hands in salt or lemon juice
- ☐ CCP: Cool within 4 hrs to below 40°F, label with date and name.
- ☐ CCP: Reheat and hold at 165°F for 15 seconds before serving
- ☐ HACCP Process #3: Complex Process

Serving Suggestions:

- Bake with carrots and other root vegetables in oil, onion and garlic (See recipe, Beets and Sweets)
- Can be served cold, in a salad with baby greens and lemon
- Can be frozen, tray-freezing is best



Central Kitchen Protocol

Made possible by funding from the Department of Health and Human Services and Public Health – Seattle & King County.

Beet Recipes with Packaging & Serving Recommendations



Benefits of Eating Beets

- Good source of vitamin C and potassium
- Beets are also high in fiber
- Beets can be microwaved, steamed, boiled, pickled, roasted or eaten raw.
- Beets contain more natural sugar than starch, therefore are delicious roasted in the oven, concentrating sugar rather than leaching out

Benefits of Eating Beet Greens

- Has a delicate flavor, not as strong as spinach
- Beet tops are excellent source of vitamin A, folate and manganese

Recipes

Beets and Sweets*

Packing and Serving Recommendations

- Elementary schools
 - CCP: School-site kitchen staff check holding temperature upon arrival
 - Served as a side entrée for a hot meal
- Secondary schools
 - Prepared and cooled according to HACCP Criteria and warmed up at school site
 - Served as a side entrée for a hot meal

Cold Beet Salad with Raspberries*

Packing and Serving Recommendations

- Elementary schools
 - Can be served in sealed portions
 - Can prepare beets prior to day of service and fold in raspberries prior to sealing

- Secondary schools
 - Can prepare beets prior to day of service and fold in raspberries prior to sealing
 - Can be served as a side salad

* Recipes (2) adapted from Minnesota's Great Trays Program – Now We're Cooking! A Collection of Simple Scratch Recipes Served in Minnesota Schools

Resources

Better Health Foundation. *Fruit and Veggies: More Matters! Vegetable and Nutrition Database: Beets*. Center for Disease and Control. Last updated: Jan 18, 2012. Accessed: Jan 2012. Available at: http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/?page_id=2660

Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition (MACSAC). *From Asparagus to Zucchini: A guide to Cooking Farm-Fresh Seasonal Produce*. 3rd Edition. Jones Books. Published September 2004.

Mennonite Central Committee. *Fruit and Vegetable Guide: Beets*. A World Community Cookbook: Simply in Season. Accessed January 2012. Available at: <http://www.worldcommunitycookbook.org/season/guide/beets.html>

Tong Cindy. *Harvesting and Storing Home Garden Vegetables*. Regents of the University of Minnesota. University of Minnesota Extension. Reviewed 2009. Accessed: Jan 2012. Available at: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/dg1424.html>

University of Illinois Extension. *Watch Your Garden Grow: Beet*. Urban Programs. University of Illinois Board of Trustees. Reviewed June 2010. Accessed: January 2012. Available at: <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/veggies/beet.cfm>

Interesting tips and methods also available at: www.healthy-beets.com

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